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ABSTRACT

A study of data on 6,846 adult literacy education students in Pennsylvania gathered information on student characteristics, instructional settings, teaching methods, and program and policy needs. Results indicate that about 34% of the students were Hispanic, 31% were Indochinese, and 21% were from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Three-quarters resided in the southeast/central part of Pennsylvania, with over 25% in Philadelphia. Most were in beginning level classes, and many were educationally disadvantaged, with literacy deficiencies common. About 20% received public financial assistance. In the 30 classes of English as a Second Language visited for the study, an obvious problem was overcrowding and lack of individual attention to students, with ramifications for classroom communication. Some teaching methods commonly used (Total Physical Response, the audio-lingual method, and cognitive methods) were not felt to be as effective as those that focus on enhancing communicative competence. The most controversial issue encountered was that of bilingual education versus use of the native language for instruction. Recommendations include reduction of class size; coordination with literacy councils to provide more volunteer tutors; use of public libraries for materials and field trips; and staff development workshops focusing on language teaching methods, specific difficulties related to first language, and cultural awareness. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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A Needs Assessment for English as a Second Language

Research Report by William Murphy, Res. Assoc. 1

Division of Adult Basic Education
and Literacy Education Programs

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Abstract

From an examination of ESL students in Pennsylvania ABLE programs it is estimated that 34 percent were Hispanic; 31 percent were Indo-Chinese; and 21 percent were from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Seventy-five percent of the students resided in Southeast/central area of Pennsylvania as far north as Allentown and as far west as Adams county. Over 25 percent lived in Philadelphia.

A majority of students were in beginning level classes. Many students are educationally handicapped. Over one-fourth had less than 12 years education in their first language. Many are unable to read in that language. These students must learn to read in their second language with a phonetic system that they do not know. Many students have urgent financial needs and twenty percent receive public assistance.

Thirty ESL classes were visited in this project. Twelve of these classes had more than fifteen students and most of the evening classes were overcrowded. The obvious problem in the larger classes was the students received little individual attention and much of the help that was being given came from other students using the first language. Many student manifested an obvious reluctance to speak in English and overcrowded classroom situations did not encourage speaking. Some classes made effective use of volunteer tutor/aides who could work individually with students as needed. In one community the literacy council worked effectively with the ESL provider to supply tutors to students referred by the classroom program. In the other areas coordination between these two types of programs was not evident. One program took the class to the public library where they obtained cards and checked out books. Students requested that audio-visual materials, dictionaries, and other materials be made available. Effective utilization of public libraries could serve this need.

Teaching methods ranged from the traditional audio-lingual methods of reading sentences and filling in the correct word to innovative projective methods in which student explained suggestive pictures in English and thus had to create their own English sentences

in a conversational setting. It is clear that the latter methods require students to think in English while with traditional methods students have little opportunity to express themselves in English.

In the review of pedagogical research in second language learning five methods were selected as exemplifying those in use in ESL programs. The Total Physical Response methods has the best record for effectiveness but requires small classes which are held frequently. Many ESL programs do not have situations that allow for this type of instruction. The audio-lingual approach refers to the traditional methods in which students repeat exercises based on grammar. These methods have been strongly criticized in recent years because the students react totally to the teacher and text and do little to express their thoughts in the second language. Students often learn the grammar well but still cannot actually use the language. Cognitive methods use exercises to teach the rules of pronunciation, grammar, etc. so that students can apply these rules. While useful, English has so many irregularities that must be learned after the general rule is understood. These methods are useful as a supplement but are too limited to guide the curriculum as a whole.

The most strongly advocated methods today are grouped under the general term of communicative competence. They require the student react to events modelled on real life or to imaginative situations. The student is required to speak and understand conversation developed for those situations. Because many programs teach life/survival skills this need can be met while teaching English. Many teachers and programs have developed lessons and classroom aids which can be interchanged within the ESL community.

The most controversial issue concerns bilingual education or the use of the first language in the curriculum. The class observations noted that the greatest use of the first language involved mutual assistance by students when the teacher was unable to help. The first language was used to translate and to explain difficult concepts. Bilingual education refers to the use of the first language to teach other subjects such as math and reading. The principal situation where it might be considered is for student who are not literate. Because they are unfamiliar with English pronunciation, phonics cannot be used as effectively to teach them to read.

The study makes four recommendations:

1. Reduction in class sizes so that teachers can provide individualized attention to students;

2. Coordination between literacy councils and classroom programs in order to provide tutor/aides for ESL classes;

3. Utilization of public libraries to provide audio tapes and other ESL resource materials and class field trips to libraries so that students can learn library procedures for accessing these materials;

4. Staff development for teachers including workshops and higher education coursework centered on second language teaching methods, the specific difficulties students have based on their first language, and the cultural background of the various ESL student populations.

ESL: Pennsylvania's New Growth Industry

I. Introduction

If we look at the adult education picture in Pennsylvania today, it becomes apparent that the greatest increase in demand has been for English classes. We have had a traditional population of Vietnamese and Puerto Ricans who have been served over the last fifteen years. Now these populations have begun again to increase while many other nationalities are entering the picture. Large numbers of immigrants are arriving from the Soviet Union, other Eastern European nations, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Central and South America.

The reasons for settlement are varied but most probably locate with family members who are already established. A large number have been recruited by specific industries. Many are supported by religious organizations. Still others are associated with study at a major university. Because of these diverse backgrounds, students will have different needs. Research in multi-cultural settings suggest that students will respond differently to instruction based on their specific background and that these differences should be acknowledged in order to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

As the number of students increases there has been a strain placed on available resources such as teaching staff, classroom space, and instructional resources. Not only must these resources be enhanced but they must be deployed in a manner that will enhance their effectiveness. The programs and institutions serving ESL students must coordinate their activities and resources to meet these needs.

In order to educate people in another language, programs should draw upon the extensive pedagogical research which has been developed on learning second languages. New methods have been developed which require students to think and create meaningful conversation in the second language as part of the instructional process. Yet many second language programs do very little to encourage these abilities even though they are fundamental in using the language in everyday life. Therefore another purpose of this report is to examine the issue of ESL instructional methods and techniques and how to encourage innovation on the part of instructors.

The major aim of this report is to examine characteristics of the ESL population and to determine how programs, curricula, and resources can be designed to meet the various needs of ESL students. There are four sections as follows:

1. Analysis of the ESL student population for program year 1990-91 to determine the nationalities, educational background, and program location of those being served;
2. Description of the classroom/tutorial situations in 19 programs which I visited.
3. Presentation and analysis of the accepted methodologies for teaching second languages as pertains to the teaching methods in use in these programs.
4. Recommendations concerning ESL needs with respect to classes, learning resources, staff development, and educational policies.

II. The ESL student population served by ABLE programs.

A. Introduction

I have extracted Data on 6,846 ESL students who have enrolled in adult education programs this program year in order to assess their background and geographical location. The information included program, county of residence, race, estimated nationality, and prior education. Information on national origin is not recorded on the student forms. Therefore I have estimated the origin based on race and last name. If the name looked Russian and the race was white, the person was tabulated as Eastern European. On the other hand no distinction was made between Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese because the names were harder to distinguish. The selected categories were East European, Italian, Japanese, Other East Asian, Indian, and Middle East. Obviously the method has limited accuracy but it may serve as a rough guide of where particular nationalities are being served.

B. Location of ESL Students

Ninety five percent of the ESL students reside in 23 counties which in turn can be grouped into 11 regions as follows:

Philadelphia	1,846
Berks Lancaster	1,250
Dauphin, Lebanon, Cumberland	809
Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, Delaware	760
Lehigh, Northampton, Carbon	545
Allegheny, Washington, Greene,Beaver	535
York, Adams, Franklin	254
Centre	236
Lackawanna, Luzerne	197
Erie	129

Obviously the division of regions is arbitrary but it does provide an impression of where the ESL population is located. It is clear that Philadelphia city, its suburban area, the Dauphin-Cumberland area, the Lancaster-Reading area, the Reading area, the Allentown-Bethlehem area, and the Allegheny County area have the largest concentrations. York, Lackawanna-Luzerne, State College, and Erie have somewhat smaller numbers. If we were to draw an arc from the Lehigh Valley around through Carlisle to Gettysburg, we would encompass the area of Pennsylvania which has over 75 % of the ESL students.

C. Agencies Serving ESL Students

Also certain providers serve large numbers of ESL students. The following table lists the major providers:

Lancaster-Lebanon IU	560
Reading Area Community College	458
Catholic Charities	452
Allegheny IU	347
New World Assn. of Immigrants	323
JCC's of Greater Philadelphia	295
Reading Berks Literacy Council	217
State College Area School District	198
Partners for ESL	195
Lincoln IU 12	186
Philadelphia School District	180
Allentown Literacy Council	149
Lutheran Children and Family Services	148
Korean Community Dev. Center	127
Delaware Co. Literacy Council	116
Lancaster Lebanon Literacy Council	115
Nationalities Service Center	113
Council of Spanish Speaking Organ.	112
Puerto Rican Organizing Committee	111
Norristown Area School District	108
Bethlehem Area School District	107

These agencies represent IU's, non-profit organizations specializing in ESL populations, school districts, literacy councils, and community colleges. Clearly some agencies have developed a strong ESL focus. This process is desirable considering the special nature of second language instruction.

D. The Race and Nationality of ESL Students

As described above, the nationality of students was estimated by race and surname. Thirty-four percent of the students were Hispanic. Therefore, they could be Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, or any one of the other Latin American nationalities. Native-born Hispanics could have been from Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, or another state. Thirty-nine percent of the Hispanics were immigrants which would imply Mexican, Central American, or South American origin.

Students classified as Asian could have come from Middle Eastern, South Asian, or East Asian countries. It appears that a few Soviet immigrants may have been classified as Asian as well. I attempted to count those from the East Asian countries with similar surnames. Surnames that appeared Islamic, Indian, and Japanese were distinguished from those which may have been Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, or Cambodian. 1.6 percent were apparently Japanese, Another 2 percent were apparently Indian. The Korean-Vietnamese-Chinese-Laotian-Cambodian classification accounted for about 31 percent of all ESL students. I would estimate that most of those students are Vietnamese.

Based on a surname which appeared Russian, Polish, Rumanian, or German, about 21 percent of ESL students may have been from East Europe. Another two percent were judged to be from Italy. About 72 percent of the students who were classified as White or other were immigrants.

While these methods are imprecise, they suggest that about 40 percent of the students are Hispanic (mostly Puerto Rican with a large number from Mexico); 30 percent are Southeast Asian and mostly Vietnamese; and 20 percent are from Eastern Europe and especially the Soviet Union.

E. Educational and Social Characteristics of ESL Students

Compared with the total number of students, a higher percentage of ESL students were female (59%) and employed (35%). Fifty-seven percent were immigrants and 84 percent were considered non-English proficient. Twenty percent were receiving public assistance. With respect to prior education, 56 percent had completed 12 years of education and 18 percent had some years of advanced education. Therefore, relative to the population as a whole, there are higher percentages of ESL student with less than 12 years of education but there are also high percentages with advanced educational backgrounds. This conforms to the observations of providers that they have large numbers of students at both extremes of the educational spectrum. Indeed, 24 percent of the ESL students have less than eight years of school and an additional 8 percent have less than four years. These students are probably not literate in their own language and have to be taught reading as well as English.

There are three levels of ESL: beginning ESL which corresponds to the 0-4 reading level; intermediate ESL which corresponds to the 5-8 reading level; and advanced ESL which corresponds to the 9-12 level. Fifty-six percent of the students are at the beginning level; 34 percent are at the intermediate level; and 11 percent are at the advanced level. We do not have follow-up data for the current year but past year's results show that 35 percent advanced at least one grade level equivalent and 19 percent advanced two or more grade level equivalents. Twenty-five percent completed one of the three levels.

Fifty-six percent are enrolled at the introductory level. The concentration of students at the lower levels has occurred year after year despite the fact that 25 percent are reported to have completed an ESL level. It appears likely that as students attain sufficient English competence to obtain employment, they are likely to leave the program. Thus we may be serving a new population each year.

III. Observations of ESL classrooms

A. Classroom Situations

I visited 30 ESL classes of varying levels and for periods ranging from a few minutes to two hours. The strongest impression that one is likely to carry from an ESL classroom is the variety of levels and native languages brought together in a class that is likely to be too large for a single teacher to handle. Of the 30 classes I visited, 12 had more than 15 students and six of those classes were at the beginning level. The smaller classes usually were those held at inconvenient times for students. As a result, teachers have difficulty providing individualized attention. When they do so, the others in the class must keep busy and often begin helping each other in their first language. In most classes, students of the same nationality tend to sit together. Some programs serve well-educated students who respond well to instruction and have appropriate study habits. However, in other programs, the students reflect low self-esteem and a short attention span. With these students there is a strong reluctance to speak in English, difficulties in assigning homework, and a higher degree of social interaction among students in their own language.

In these larger classes, the availability of a volunteer aide/tutor greatly facilitated individualized attention to student needs. This was the case in three of the classes which I visited. This attention also requires the student to speak in English while not requiring that they do so in front of the class. The aide can also be assigned to students who are at a different level from the other students. Because students may be at varied levels of English competence, there is a significant need to vary instruction.

The differences between large classes and small classes was striking. In the large classes, when the teacher began to go around to each student, the others may have had seatwork but would nevertheless sit or talk with others in the first language. Often they were receiving help with the work but that help was carried on in the first language. In smaller classes the teacher could move around the table and involve everyone. This attention encourages students to speak in English and limited side conversations in the first language.

B. Teaching Methods

The second general impression concerns the variety of teaching methodologies used by teachers even within the same program. Many teachers continue to use traditional grammatical and pronunciation exercises which have become discredited as a means for second language instruction. Others use more contemporary texts which use contemporary situations to increase competence in handling life skills situations as well as to require more speaking and thinking in English. Still other teachers use innovative methods to initiate student conversation and thinking centered on some topic designed to excite student interest. The discussion of methods will be elaborated in the third section. At this point it is clear that many teachers need training in newer approaches and other teachers have ideas which could be profitably shared with others.

Examples of the traditional methods include exercises in which the students alternate filling in the correct verb form in a sentence. One teacher had the students reading off the names of the states. When a student read Arkansas the way it was spelled, the teacher corrected him without any explanation. The student should have been told that the pronunciation was irregular. English spelling and verb forms are highly irregular. Nevertheless there are rules that students should learn first before having to learn all of the exceptions. For instance the "ea" dipthong in hear, heard, and heart is pronounced three different ways. However, the pronunciation in "hear" is the most likely because vowel dipthongs tend to use the long sound of the first vowel. Despite the vast number of exceptions, beginning students need simple rules.

The major problem with these methods is that the students are not required during class time to initiate any English language statements. They simply respond to the initiatives of the teacher and are corrected as needed. While this approach has value in teaching correct grammatical usage; it should not be allowed to take time from methods which require the student to think and speak in English. Moreover, they are intrinsically boring because the student does not initiate the sentences.

When using recently developed techniques teachers choose subjects of intrinsic interest and require that students discuss it in the second language. Role-play situations are also acted out so that students must create their own sentences in order to interact with others. The situations could be related to real-life situations so that students learn life skills as well as English conversation. One interesting technique involved showing students suggestive pictures and asking them to describe what they saw. First they had to describe facts and then interpret the reactions of the people in the picture. Another program took the students to the public library, had them check out books, and then discussed what they were reading in class. This had the additional advantage of exposing them to libraries.

As a compromise approach between such innovative techniques and the traditional approaches, many texts use real-life situations at topics and then present conversation and exercises based on those situations. Thus the students is still directed by the instruction but has to do create sentences and discuss the material in the second language. Verses and musical interludes contribute to a better feel for pronunciation while breaking the sense of routine. One beginning class conducted group calisthenics in English. This provided a break while requiring the use of English by students in leading exercises.

Of the 30 classes which I observed, eight appeared to be using traditional methods during the brief time I was there. Five appeared to be using innovative techniques requiring that the student develop their own sentences and converse or write in English. The remaining seventeen classes utilized text-based approaches which guided the class but nonetheless required that students initiate responses to questions.

C. Student Recommendations for the ESL Program

In addition to observing classes, I asked student what could be done to improve the ESL program. More and smaller classes as well as summer schedules were requested but are clearly contingent on funding. Some of the suggestions would not require major funding changes. The most frequently requested need was for audio-tapes with read along texts. Cambodian and Laotian students requested dictionaries in their respective languages. Both items could be made available at local libraries. Then classes could follow the example of that program which took the students to the library, obtained cards, and taught them how to utilize its resources.

One intermediate class requested that they be divided into two classes as follows: students whose principal need was English conversation and students whose principal need was reading in English. Each class could then focus on the primary need of the student. The request was made by jointly by a young Mexican worker and a student from Japan. The worker had practice in conversation in his job and needed more instruction in reading and grammar. The Japanese student had studied English in school and required extensive conversational practice. This distinction also showed up in other classes. Certain nationalities had greater problems with English pronunciation while other had conversational exposure and required less practice in speaking and listening. Moreover, students with a strong educational background had less difficulty with reading and grammar than those who lacked that first language education. This problem illustrates the fact that the simple distinctions of beginning, intermediate, and advanced are not sufficient to precisely target instruction.

D. Observations on Language Learning.

It should be stated that ESL programs serve two functions: the teaching of English and the teaching of life/survival skills. These two functions do not have to conflict. Because students learn best when the subject matter is clearly relevant to personal needs, many ESL curricula have been developed in which English is taught in the context of communicating in situations such as job interviews, hospital clinics, catching a bus etc. In this way, students are required to project themselves into situations and think in English how they respond.

It is my view, that such approaches follow the most important factor in the learning of another language. Encounters in the language may actually be brief. However, when one is aware that they will occur, he/she will mentally rehearse what to say and how to react in the second language. In so doing the process of thinking in that language begins. By recreating such situations in the classroom, ESL can replicate that process.

When the individual comes here, they are thrown into a variety of vital situations with which they cannot cope. They may come to rely on interpreters and thus not progress. This may be unavoidable at first because of the gravity of the situation. However, recreating such situations in the classroom and requiring the student to negotiate through them in English appears to me to be valuable because of the necessity of the English rehearsal. In this way "survival and life skills" can also be incorporated into instruction.

IV. Methods in Second Language Instruction: the Research Literature

A. Summary of the Methods

Methods in ESL instruction have traditionally categorized as follows:

1. The total physical response method in which instruction utilizes props and continuous activity to illustrate the meanings of words and sentences;

2. The audio-lingual approach which refers to traditional repetition exercises in grammar and sentence construction;

3. Functional competency methods which use role play and imaginative speaking and listening in situations modelled after real life problems.

4. Cognitive methods which stress the inductive awareness of general rules even when the rules have many exceptions.

5. Bilingual Education in which the first language is used extensively to instruct in English or in other subjects that must be learned while studying English.

When we look at problems in ESL instruction it is important to note that they parallel the problems associated with foreign language instruction. It curious that ESL and foreign language instruction have remained institutionally separate when in fact they are equivalent. The research literature refers simply to second language instruction or SLA and that reference is carried over here. These categories have clear parallels in the methods which were used by teachers in the classroom's which I observed. Teachers may have had academic level courses on language teaching; they may have attended staff development workshops; they may use textbooks which are oriented to a particular method; or they may simply be using methods with which they previously learned another language.

B. Traditional or Audio-Lingual Methods

These methods have sparked considerable debate about which methods are most effective relative to the student's level of English understanding. The criticisms of traditional methods suggest that they do not follow the methods by which children learn their first language. These criticisms were summarized by Cook:

> 1. "If one holds that second language learning is essentially a different process than first language acquisition, the development of a second language is different than the developmental course of first language. The first language is acquired slowly with many wrong turns and dead ends. Second language learning need not involve this process. Indeed, traditional teachers, committed to the view that second language learning is different than first language acquisition, usually demand that second language learners speak grammatically from the beginning."
>
> 2. He criticized the attitude towards errors. "The student must not experiment with new combinations as with the first language learning. Instead the student must make the correct response in the stimulus situation arranged by the teacher. The teaching situation is structured so as to minimize the possibility of errors."
>
> 3. The last issue concerned the organization of input. "The material presented is systematically ordered and restricted. Then this material is repeated to the point of overlearning. Sentences are presented in their entirety rather than allowing student to expand on them and utilize knowledge of underlying grammatical relationships. Or student may be encouraged to expand sentences in situationally appropriate ways with freedom to experiment."

He recommended that instruction in a second language follow the model of first language learning. The experience of foreign language programs offers considerable insight into the problems we find in ESL instruction.[McLaughlin: 135,136]

During the rapid expansion of foreign language instruction during the 60's, audio-lingual methods were used extensively. It was believed that by utilizing the audio-lingual approach, these programs would greatly increase the number of Americans speaking other languages. However, the instruction had little long term impact as the students quickly lost whatever they might have learned.

One problem may have been that they never had to think in the language and utilize what they had learned. Another was that the constant repetition bored students and never allowed them to explore the intricacies of language at the more advanced level. Many ESL teachers were educated by audio-lingual methods and this may explain their reluctance to adopt new techniques.

C. Cognitive Methods: Learning the Rules of a Language

The second issue of first language interference suggests that rules and practices in the first language will interfere with learning the second language. However, this tendency can also facilitate second language learning when the rules correspond between the two languages. One study of errors on the part of second language learners found that one-third of the errors could be attributed to interference by misapplied first language rules. The remaining two thirds of the errors were due to attempts to generalize and apply rules of the second language before they had been mastered[S. Ervin Tripp]. An example of this type of error would be one in which an 'ed' past tense suffix was used with an irregular verb. Such errors are common with children when they learn English as a first language.

On the other hand transference can be an aid to learning English if similarities are exploited. For instance, Spanish and English vocabularies share about 90 percent of the words which can be a significant aid if students are taught to recognize how the original Latin root was modified for each language. Correspondence in verb conjugations is another area that can be exploited. The use of transference can be greatly facilitated if the instructor is familiar with the first language and those rules which can be exploited to advantage. Alternatively, instructors could be trained in such rules.

Interference can be minimized also when the curriculum takes into account the rules of specific languages and focussing on differences so that the student is aware of them. This has been done in pronunciation for many languages. Sounds which are absent in the students' first language are drilled as are differences in sounds such as the Spanish d, t, and p. The same could be done on verb tenses, pronouns, and prepositions.

D. Communicative Competency Methods

Communicative approaches see language as a "meaning-based phenomenon that exists in a social setting, and language-learning as a product of social interaction. These methods create interaction situations in the class room which require the students to speak and listen in the second language in order to interact. Correction of what the student says is minimized because it disrupts the interaction and discourages further speaking. The assumption is that as the student's competence develops, erroneous usage will diminish without constant correction.

Communicative approaches include the following:

1. Total Physical Response(TPR) which uses class props and gestures to intensively involve the student in listening to and reacting to the teacher's activities[Chamot:35].
2. Notational/functional methods which identify the situations where a student would have to use English and develop classroom exercises which teach the student to function in that situation[Chamot:39].
3. The Natural approach is based the performance of everyday tasks and teach the student to communicate in order to accomplish everyday activities[Chamot:50].
4. The language experience approach encourages students to produce their own reading material based on their own interests and activities. These writings are then used subsequently in class[Chamot:28].

The Total Physical Response method is taught exclusive of other methods. This method has proven the most effective overall but does require a significant amount of class time and commitment. If that is not possible, the method is not more effective. The teacher points out objects while naming them in English. Verbs are used and commands are issued for the student to follow. Intense interaction requires concentration and small classes. Also classes should be held frequently in order for students to carry over what they are learning.

The other communicative approaches are used interchangeably even though they were developed as comprehensive approaches. Often they are utilized because the teacher uses a text such as Side-by-Side which follows a functional format. Because so many ESL programs are also involved with survival/life skills, the notational/functional and the natural approaches allow the integration of a life skills subject matter into the ESL curriculum. Students learn how to deal with real life situations by doing exercises and role-plays modeled after those situations. Moreover, the daily relevance of what is being taught is evident to the student. The language experience method is perhaps more appropriate for advanced students or those who seek to learn English in order to pursue higher education. Many students are primarily concerned with speaking and listening while this method focuses on writing.

In the classes which I observed there were a number of effective lessons that enhance communicative competence. The Side-by-Side text had a lesson on renting an apartment which was obviously sub-standard according to the illustration. The student answered questions concerning cracks in the plaster, broken window panes, and dirty floors. Then they were asked about their own feelings in similar situations and invited to contribute from their own experiences. Some grammar was introduced in the questions but was not stressed over the central theme. Thus the lesson related to life skills because conversation centered on what to ask and how to handle a rental situation. Moreover, the students had to describe their own reactions and experiences as part of the lesson.

A class used current events and Middle East geography as a central theme while grammar and pronunciation were included. Another class presented a recent election and discussed the results. Books which had been checked out during a class trip to the public library were discussed. Automobile problems and repairs were the topic of yet another class. A class on supermarket shopping was aided by a drawing of a supermarket shelf which included pictures of products. Coupons were also used in the class. Prepositions were part of the lesson plan because of their relevance to the location of items on the shelves. In other words, grammar and pronunciation were brought together with life skills and students interests in the lessons.

More imaginative techniques were utilized in the use of pictures and drawings which the students had to describe and interpret. One class used a large photograph of a confrontation between a child and a mason who had just finished a sidewalk. The boy was standing before the mason in the middle of the wet cement. His tracks were visible behind him and he looked upset. The students described the facts of the situation first. Next they were asked to interpret what they thought the feelings of each of the two persons would be and why they would feel that way. This exercise required students to think and speak in English in sentences which they had to create.

E. Bilingual Education and using the Student's First Language

Another movement which has been highly controversial has been that of bilingual education. The original goals of the program included competence in the child's first language, pride in one's own cultural heritage, and improved competence in mathematics, social studies, and other non-language subjects through instruction in the first language. The first two goals have been strongly rejected in the political process and thus the case for bilingual education hinges on its effectiveness in teaching other subjects. If the use of English to teach reading and math retards the progress of children whose first language is not English then there is an advantage to bilingual instruction. The research results thus far are mixed. When both the first language and English are used in instruction, there appears to be confusion and learning is retarded even more. However, when students are instructed exclusively in their first language, they progress faster than when instruction occurs exclusively in English. [McLaughlin:pp. 186-188] It is also unclear whether these research results would apply to adult.

In our programs there are two situations in which non-English proficient adults are taught subjects other than English. The first instance is with those adults who cannot read in their own language and have to be taught to read while learning English. The other case is GED instruction for those whose first language in not English. I observed two such GED classes. However, in both cases, the students were preparing to take the GED in English and the language of instruction was English. However, the students appeared to benefit from being able to clarify points in their first language when necessary and also there was more attention to ensuring they understood.

The case of non-literate adults trying to learn English and reading at the same time is particularly problematic. There are many from Southeast Asian and Latin American societies who are non-literate. Some come from a culture in which the language does not have a written form. It is particularly difficult to use phonics to teach reading when the students cannot speak the language. I observed one class for non-reading ESL students. Instruction was entirely in English. It was obvious that the students had considerable difficulty adjusting to the phonetics of the English text used in instruction. The irregular pronunciation of English words was more problematic for this group as well. We can expect increasing numbers of students who will have to be taught reading as well as English. It will be necessary to devote considerable study to how best to serve these students.

While we have no bilingual classes, we do have classes in which the teacher speaks the first language of the student and may occasionally use that language the explain more difficult points or to put students at ease. Trying to speak a second language can cause considerable strain. The occasional use of the first language can assist to ease that strain. However, considerable control has to be exercised to see that English usage prevails and the students are required to think and express themselves in English.

Eleven of the classes which I visited had instructors who were fluent in the first language of most of the students. Only in one instance, however, did it appear that the class was relying excessively on the first language. In most other cases, the teacher was strict about English and only utilized the first language to translate difficult vocabulary. Only the Total Physical Response method is designed to provide the meanings of words without resorting to translation. Otherwise, translation is a necessary evil. Three teachers required translation exercises as part of homework. This allows the student to come to class prepared to understand the work.

In general, the controversy surrounding bilingual education is a non-issue in adult education. The principal need is to learn English and students use their first language as a means to understand class work and to ease the strain of working in an unfamiliar language. The major problem are the students who are non-literate in their first language. It is very difficult to learn to read in a second language when one cannot do so with the familiar sounds of their own language. There needs to be more research into how best to serve these students.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

A. Reduced class size

In visiting a large number of different programs, this study discovered a number of approaches and arrangements which should be disseminated more widely for effective ESL instruction. In addition I observed the large size of many ESL classes and the difficulties which confronted teachers when dealing with so many students at varying levels of English competency. The fact that twelve were two large understates the problem since I observed classes at various times through the day. Nearly all of the evening classes and many of the early morning classes had too many students. One director even stated that he did not worry about high enrollments because early separations brought classes down to manageable sizes. However, one wonders if excessive size contributed to the loss of students.

Lowering class size allows teachers to provide more individualized attention. This attention can keep students focussed on speaking and thinking in English. However, an even greater benefit is that students can be grouped more precisely by their needs. As I pointed out above, student needs cannot be based only on which of the three levels they fall into. Even for students at the same general level, some are more advanced verbally and need reading and written instruction. Others require a focus on speaking and listening. If intermediate classes could be divided according to these needs, students could be better served.

B. Increased Use of Tutors

The availability of a tutor/aide can greatly enhance the effectiveness of instruction because more individualized attention can be given while the teacher is covering course material. With one teacher in a large classroom, the class attention is lost whenever individualized attention is being provided. Another advantage is the referral of students with specific needs to those programs which provide tutors. In three instances I observed close cooperation between tutoring and classroom programs. In other cases, however, the two types of programs did little coordination. Therefore increase cooperation and referrals must be promoted so that the two types of programs can effectively serve these needs.

Moreover, tutor training programs mentioned that many would-be volunteers were hesitant about ESL students because they felt they had to know the student's language. This erroneous belief should be dealt with in tutor recruitment literature.

C. Availability of Learning Resources

The most common request of students was to have audio-visual aids and language reference materials available outside of class. Most programs had a resource center of some sort. However, these materials are available only to students at that program and only at the hours the office is open. Moreover, they are not set up to keep track of the items. The most obvious location for ESL resources is the local library. However, many beginning students may have strong reservations about going to an English only site and would be fearful about library procedures. The best way to overcome these fears is for classes to include library visits and the application for a library card as part of the instruction. At that time the ESL resources would be displayed and students taken through the process of checking them out. Special attention should be given to audio tapes and read along books. They play a special role in language learning.

D. Staff Training and Development

Given the high rate of staff turnover and the fact that many ESL instructors do not have academic credentials either in ESL or in foreign language instruction; there is a great need for concentrated staff development in the methods for teaching English. As noted above, I observed a significant number of teachers who were using methods which recent research has found to be ineffective. On the other hand, teachers who were using innovative techniques often referred to workshops or to in-service training as the place where they picked up the new ideas. Nevertheless, methods in second language instruction and even the substance of English language grammar and phonetics is complex. If programs are unable to obtain properly credentialed teachers, they should be able to sent those teachers to classes or intensive in-service training which will provide at least some education in the methods and substance of ESL practice.

While teachers should not systematically use the second language in the classroom, some knowledge of that language will help them to understand the problems which students will have in the classroom. If they are aware of pronunciation in the first language, they will know what sounds to emphasize in the classroom. It is even more important that they know something about the cultural background of their students. Student bring more than language needs to the class, a teacher should know the significant features of their culture. Then they can integrate these features into the instruction.

Therefore, the fourth recommendation is that the level of ESL instruction be improved by providing training and educational opportunities to teachers. This training should go beyond half day sessions and include full length courses which will thoroughly acquaint ESL instructors with the methods utilized in second language instruction.

E. Summary

English language students constitute a highly motivated and capable segment of the adult population in need. Nevertheless, effective instruction requires limited class size and individualized attention. Volunteer tutors can be of great assistance in supplementing classroom instruction. Audio-visual aids can help students work with English on their own time. Both the utilization of tutors and audio-visual aids require greater coordination between ESL providers, literacy councils, and local libraries.

Considerable attention should be given to the training and the retention of ESL instructors. Effective techniques in second language instruction have been developed in recent years but these techniques have not been passed on to all instructors. Moreover, the utilization of new teachers who have no prior ESL education requires that they have available to them training in this area.

ESL instruction is very different from conventional ABE teaching and requires specialized staff development. Previously, much of the instruction has been carried out by agencies which specialized in ESL and were aware of the needs which are presented here. As new agencies begin programs to meet this need, we shall have to provide the technical assistance which they will need to implement an effective program.

Appendix 1
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